

PLAY BASED PRINCIPLE IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS

Rasulov Elmurod

Master Student, Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages named after Isxakhan Ibrat
shamsiddinovmaqsasjon@gmail.com

Advisor Erkulova Feruza Melikuziyevna

PhD, Associate Professor Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages named after Isxakhan Ibrat

Abstract

In today's globalized world, foreign language proficiency is a valuable skill, and research shows that early language exposure has significant cognitive, social, and linguistic benefits. This research focuses on developing and implementing a play-based approach to teaching foreign languages to very young learners (age 6), leveraging their natural curiosity and love for play to foster language acquisition. The research was conducted experimentally with 60 students of a public kindergarten in Namangan, Uzbekistan, and teachers working in different kindergartens were asked to answer the survey question. The findings of the study showed that Play-based learning creates an engaging, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate environment for children to acquire a new language.

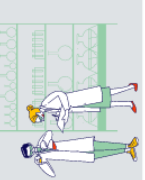
Keywords: Task-Based Learning learning, young learners, kindergarten, games, songs.

Introduction

The early years of a child's life are a critical period for cognitive, social, and linguistic development. During this time, children are particularly receptive to new experiences and languages, making early childhood an ideal stage for introducing foreign language learning. However, traditional methods of language instruction often fail to engage very young learners effectively. To address this, educators and researchers have increasingly turned to play-based learning as an innovative and developmentally appropriate approach to foreign language teaching. This research paper first reviews the relevant literature on the significance of the usage of play in the teaching process, then goes on the main research by analyzing and discussing students' pretest and posttest results, and gives conclusions and recommendations for the further studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Play-based learning has emerged as an effective pedagogical approach for teaching foreign languages to very young learners (ages 3-7). Children at this age learn best through active engagement, hands-on experiences, and playful activities that align with their developmental needs. This literature review synthesizes key studies and research findings in this field,



emphasizing the benefits, strategies, and challenges associated with play-based foreign language teaching.

Zeynep Yalcin`s (2022) study provides a comprehensive review of play-based learning, categorizing it into child-directed, teacher-directed, and mutually-directed play. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each type, suggesting that teachers select the approach that best suits children's needs and learning objectives.

21st Century Learning for Early Childhood Guide (2015) highlights the role of peer interactions in play, noting that children observe and imitate others during play, which aids in developing social and emotional skills. Engaging in rule-based games and negotiating themes within dramatic play activities fosters self-regulation and perspective-taking, essential components of language development.

The article named Play-Based Learning: What Research Tells Us (2023) discusses how play-based learning recognizes that children learn content while playing freely, with teacher guidance, or in a structured game. By harnessing children's natural curiosity and their propensity to experiment, explore, problem-solve, and stay engaged in meaningful activities—especially when doing so with others—teachers maximize learning while individualizing learning goals.

These studies collectively highlight that integrating play into language learning not only makes the process enjoyable but also effectively enhances cognitive and linguistic development. Educators are encouraged to consider the various types of play-based learning and their respective strengths to create engaging and effective language learning.

METHODS/METHODOLOGIES

This study followed Campbell and Stanley's (1963) quasi-experimental testing method, with a study group consisting of experimental and control groups drawn at random. During the procedure materials were taught with the help of the playing games principle developed by Karen Murhpy ,2003 and the numerous empirical studies have shown enhanced retention, increased motivation and engagement and the improved vocabulary acquisition. To test the effectiveness of the play based methods , primarily, observations were done in the urban public kindergarten in Namangan city. The quantity of students aged 6 were selected by the researches, the control group consisted of 30 students and the experimental group 30. This research was proceeded during 4 weeks and students had 8 lessons, each lesson lasted 30 minutes.

Process Steps.

At the beginning of the process according to the research design pretest was conducted both from the control and experimental group, the pretest was in a form of oral interview to check their background knowledge. Afterwhich, students results were compared and divided into control and experimental groups, after which teaching with the tools such as, toys, songs, realia for role plays started in the experimental group, while the control group had lessons in the traditional teaching methods and learned a foreign with the help of repetition drills and chants

.The first week, two lessons were conducted, and the main aim was to introduce a half part of the vocabulary on topic " Fruits " in the experimental group these topic based words were consolidated with the help of real fruits and role plays, while in the control group students used pictures according to the topic. In the following week, the experimental group had 2 lessons when songs and TPR activities were used, while the experimental group used only flaschcards. In the third week of research, the second half of the vocabulary was introduced as the first half did and in the last week all words were revised, reinforced. After the teaching procedure (4 weeks, we took posttest and carefully sorted out and analyzed the results.

Tools

In the current research study several tools were utilized. Firstly, to find out the background knowledge of students and after study ``Roll and say for kindergarten`` activity by Kimberley (2014) was used. Basically, conversation was used to measure the effectiveness of teaching English through plays in the study. To check the teacher's opinions, their usage of visuals and multimedia during the lessons and their challenges another paper based survey was conducted. To find out the teachers perceptions and opinions about the usage of the play based principle 10 most essential questions were given to teachers and results were analysed.

Analyzing data

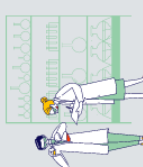
In the study, the data was analysed by comparing test results with the pretest and posttest assessment, and teachers answers were given in the bar, pie chart form.

RESULTS

Table 1 demonstrates the results of pretest vocabulary that checked the background of the leaders. According to the results of the analysis, the mean score of the experimental group was 51, while the mean score of the control group was 55. The t value of 4, 97 shows the difference between the knowledge of students in the given words.

Background vocabulary knowledge	Group	N	Mean	t
	Experimental	30	51	-4
	Control	30	55	

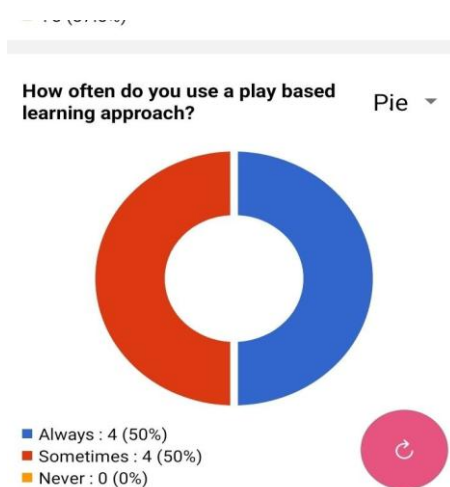
Table 2 shows the results of the after research has been conducted and positively for both experimental and control groups. While experimental groups results soared up to 92 with demonstration of the high effectiveness teaching plays, control group improved their ability to 89 percent that shows the effectiveness of teaching traditionally.



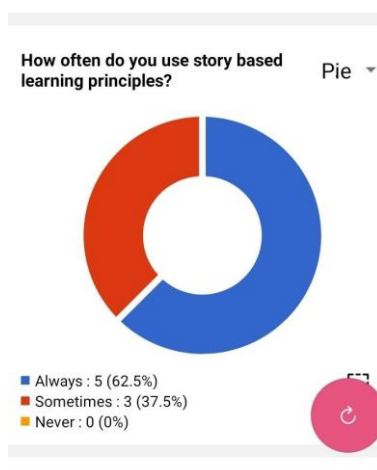
Post test results	Group	N	Mean	t
	Experimental	30	80	
	Control	30	75	-5

We have collected an analytical survey from colleague teachers, who have from 3 to 15 years work-experience in teaching English as a foreign language, and analysed questions outcomes, in detail.

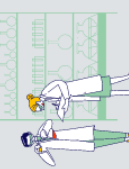
As you can see all the educators use play based learning approach either always or sometimes.



62.5 percent teachers always make a use of story based learning principles while 37.5 percent .EFL teachers sometimes use them



There were some open ended questions too. More than half teachers use play based pedagogical principles while others prefer task based learning approach.





Вопрос: What pedagogical principles do you use for teaching a foreign language to very young learners?
без заголовка



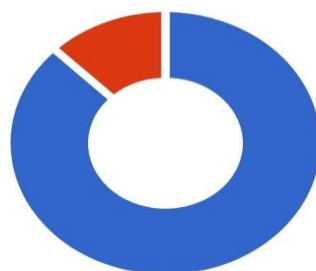
As the pie chart shows controlling a noisy class is the biggest among all the teachers who answered this question of the survey. According to their detailed answer this happens due to a short attention span of very young learners which is quite common for this age group.

Вопрос: What is the biggest challenge in teaching a foreign language to very young learners?



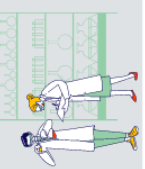
According to the present survey results, most teachers think that very young learners should not do any homework as they consider that homeworks may become burden for children and as a result they may not be interested in learning a foreign language.

Вопрос: Do you think young learners should do homework? If yes, how



■ Вариант 1 : 7 (87.5%)
■ : 1 (12.5%)

A noisy class is the same difficulty among all the respondents.



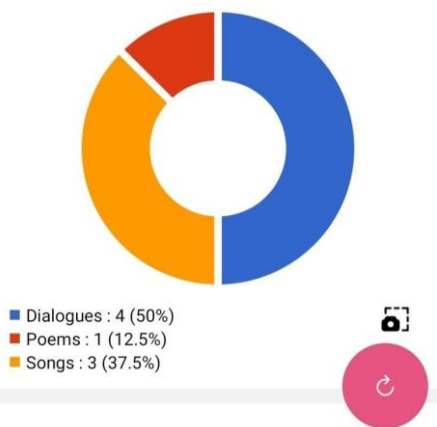


Write down any any difficulties you have when you teach a foreign language to very young learners? Pie ▾



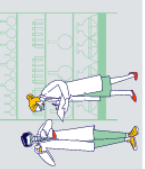
As the illustration shows the half of the teachers use dialogues to improve their students` speaking skills while 37,5 percents educators use songs and 12,5 percent for poems

What do you use most in order to improve young learners speaking? Pie ▾



Most teachers use chain drills to reduce a noise in the class while others suggest to be strict.

How can you reduce noise made by very young learners? Pie ▾



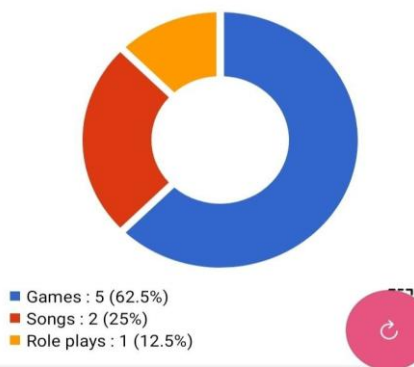
It is not surprising that all the teachers answers that they use play based methods to make kids stay focused which include role plays, moving around classroom activities in their detailed answers.

What methods do use to make young learners stay focused on the topic? Pie



62,5 percent teachers claimed that games are effective in making young learners interested while a quarter of the respondents choose songs and 12,5 percent for role plays.

What do you use most in order to make young learners interested? Pie



DISCUSSION

Our study found that teaching young learners through plays gives better results than the traditional method of teaching, and in our study the experimental group learned the topic better and gained 5 scores higher which shows the effectiveness of the approach. Also play-based learning allowed children to learn at their own pace, follow their interests, and make choices, which created a more engaging and meaningful learning experience. The another finding was that the learners' motivation to study the language was increased, in comparison to the control group students. The pupils' attention span was also prolonged as they are fond of playing games. Play-based foreign language teaching for very young learners is an effective and engaging approach that harnesses the natural inclination of young children to learn through play. The implication of this study is significant as there is increased results both in language learning and motivation. However, as it was observed during research classes and according to

the survey results kids may overplay and it may become difficult to control a class. The further research must focus more on how to choose certain implement certain games whichnalso may help in contolling a class

CONCLUSION

The study has tested the effectiveness of teaching English vocabulary through play. Play-based foreign language teaching offers a highly effective approach for engaging very young learners. Through interactive games, songs, storytelling, and imaginative activities, children can acquire a new language naturally and joyfully. These methods cater to their developmental needs by promoting active participation, sensory engagement, and social interaction, all of which are critical for early childhood learning.

In conclusion, play-based methods not only make foreign language acquisition accessible to young learners but also nurture essential cognitive, social, and emotional skills. As research continues to support the efficacy of this approach, its integration into early childhood education should be prioritized to provide children with a strong foundation for lifelong language learning.

